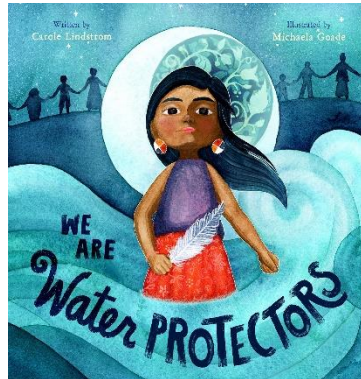


## Second Reaction: Indigenous-Led Movement Poured into an Inspiring Youth Story

Lindstrom, Carole. *We Are Water Protectors*. Illustrated by Michaela Goade. New York: Roaring Book Press, 2020. Print.



*Kayla Johnson*

Carole Lindstrom's powerful picture book *We Are Water Protectors* was perfectly timed for not only myself, but my students as well. We were only days into the new year of 2021 and my students were excited about all the possibilities this brought us. This book also helped me share a piece of my culture with my students as we discovered more about the issues Indigenous People have been fighting and protesting. When I first read the book before sharing it with my students, I saw some background knowledge that I would need to provide them. My students enjoyed researching the Ojibwe culture before reading and learning new words like Nokomis, which means grandmother.

There were multiple reasons I wanted to share this book with my students, particularly our choice of project-based learning topic: pollution and our carbon footprint. This book was a great addition to this topic as it features the fight against oil pipelines within waterways and tribal lands. The story and illustrations do an amazing job at showing the harm oil pipelines within waterways can cause our environment.

When reading the book for my students, I traveled around the room, showing them all the stunning illustrations. Due to our current pandemic, this was the best way I could think to stay

socially distant while sharing the book's illustrations. It also provided my students time to process as well as allow them to ask questions. We have been learning about literal and figurative language all year, and this book gave wonderful examples that my students were able to identify. An instance of this within the book was, "The river's rhythm runs through my veins" (Lindstrom unpagged). In response, one student stated, "The river's rhythm is like the beating we feel in our bodies. It is not really water." This led to a wonderful discussion of why the book utilized figurative language to express its message.

We recently covered a poetry unit in which repetition was used to emphasize a central theme or message. My students were able to recognize this within *We Are Water Protectors*. About every couple of pages, the same line was repeated, stating, "We stand with our songs. And our drums. We are still here" (unpagged). One student expressed, "They are repeating that a lot because it is important. No one wants to be forgotten." I continued to engage the students within this book by allowing open conversations and questions to occur. I did not want to answer these questions immediately, but instead wrote them down on the whiteboard. These were revisited after the book was completed for partner research, which led to a group discussion based on the information found.

My favorite part of the book was the "Earth Steward and Water Protector Pledge." I made copies of this page, so students could read it together and add their name if they would like to take the pledge at the end of the book. This was a great way for the students to interact with the book further. The rest of the day, the students talked about their new responsibility to the earth and how they would handle it. Overall, I feel this book is an incredible way for younger readers to be introduced to a new culture and the environmental struggles currently plaguing our earth. This work is a call to arms showing students the importance of their voice and speaking up for those who cannot. It paints Mother Earth as an equal that needs to be treated with respect, which I believe is a valuable lesson our young readers need. It was stated perfectly in the Earth Steward and Water Protector Pledge within this book, "I will do my best to honor Mother Earth and all living beings, including the water and land. I will always remember to treat the Earth as I would like to be treated" (unpagged).

### **Works Cited**

Lindstrom, Carole. *We Are Water Protectors*. Illustrated by Michaela Goade New York: Roaring Book Press, 2020. Print.

### **About the Author**

**Kayla Johnson** is a fourth-grade teacher with a love of cultivating an inclusive and positive classroom climate. In her spare time, she is currently finishing her Master of Arts in Teaching at Marian University and enjoys exploring her heritage within the Ojibwe tribe.